

Report of the Implementation Group for the Arts-in-Education Charter to Minister Jan O’Sullivan T.D. and Minister Heather Humphreys, T.D.

October 2015

The Implementation Group for the Arts-in-Education Charter is pleased to submit its fifth biannual report to the Minister for Education and Skills and the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. The Group is glad to report continuing progression on a range of the Charter’s objectives:

Arts-in-Education Portal

The Arts in Education Portal was launched on 19th May 2015. Since its launch the Arts in Education Portal has been developing as a new space where both artists and teachers can be supported and inspired. The launch of the Portal marked a very significant step in terms of having one space where practice with artists, children and teachers in schools is profiled. This marks a beginning point, from which to build the community and to support artists and teachers to build their skills in reflecting and documenting their practice. As a window for the charter, the Portal also represents an opportunity to reflect on key developments within the sector. Analytics show that the Arts in Education Portal had nearly 10,000 visits since it went live on 19th May. The analytics show that the news section on the portal has proved to be the most popular content closely followed by projects and partnerships. The news feature is an important aspect on the site as it is the key space for the cultural institutions, arts organisations and the education sector to inform each other about opportunities for training and events.

The constant flow of news on the portal has kept the site dynamic and up to date. Ongoing communication with the sector is key in developing the portal as the key national digital resource of arts in education practice in Ireland. This happens through daily social media feeds and also through a monthly newsletter. As we continue to develop this space, we are becoming more aware of the needs of the sector and the kinds of supports that are needed to continue developing practice and supporting a strong ethos of arts in education practice across the sector. Our commissioning plan for the year includes new projects & partnerships; critical essays, online talks; resource videos, events, as well as the development of the Directory of local/ national activity and the Reading Room.

A key aspect of year one is to build the practical skills of teachers and artists' in terms of documenting and reflecting on practice and supporting both artist and teachers in submitting their work to the portal. As part of our plans we will deliver a series of online events with a focus on photography, video, reflection and dissemination. The outcomes from this training will be developed into an online guide for teachers and artists. We also want to ensure that the portal reflect the breadth of practice that is taking place and provide support and guidance for artists and teachers. With this in mind we will be working with the Arts Council to develop practical audio-visual representation of the Artists~Schools Guidelines. These guidelines will provide an underpinning context for the content on the Arts in Education Portal. Our proposed National Arts in Education Week in May 2016, will provide a platform to promote and build energy about the work that is happening at a local level. It will also provide a strong opportunity to promote the Portal and its role in supporting the development of the sector.

Dialogue and Partnership

The Implementation group has sustained its efforts at maintaining interactive partnership and dialogue with many organisations and individuals. Members have engaged in meetings with a host of agencies on aspects of the Charter. The Charter continues to be a stimulus to many groups who view it as a concrete expression of both Departments' support and goodwill for art-in-education. A new climate of collaboration, mutual support and joined up thinking is being fostered within the arts-in-education community.

The ingredients for a major culture change in arts-in-education provision are in evidence. The ground is prepared for co-ordinated strategic thinking and action. It is important that heightened expectations are met and that goodwill is not lost, as has happened in the past. Accordingly there is a need to seize the opportunity and make the sought for breakthrough for the arts-in-education. There is a need for sustained attention by government and inter-departmental co-operation to achieve the potential.

One element of this ought to be a specific budget provision by the two key Departments to ensure that their objectives, as set out in the Charter, can be satisfactorily realised.

Initial and Continuing Professional Development of Artists and Teachers

Nurturing the abilities and commitment of artists and teachers for the promotion of arts-in-education is a central concern of the Implementation Group. One of its major initiatives in this regard was the design and implementation of a pilot teacher-artist CPD Partnership Scheme.

“Exploring Teacher-Artist Partnership as a Model of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for Supporting and Enhancing Arts Education” began with a process of design in September 2013. The implementation phase began in the summer of 2014 when six Lead Teacher- Artist pairs engaged in a five day residential personal & professional development programme.

During the period September 2014 and January 2015, six in-school arts projects took place in six primary schools across Ireland. A total of 20 hours duration was allocated to each project; 6 of those hours were allocated for ongoing project planning. The projects were in a variety of art forms: visual art (2), dance, drama, music and literature (language arts).

Research was integral to this teacher-artist partnership initiative from its inception. The learning presented in the Research Report conducted during Phases 1 & 2 and based on the experience of the teacher-artist partnerships examined is intended to inform the design of future partnership initiatives and to contribute to the development and sustainability of such partnerships in schools. This report has been released in draft at this time. It is intended that it will be published.

Phase 3 of the Initiative was implemented in summer 2015 when the Lead Teacher-Artist Pairs presented a summer course on teacher-artist partnership to sixty teachers and eighteen artists across the country. This has created extraordinary potential and a sense of excitement and expectation, which must be nurtured and developed. There is an imperative for a strategic response involving all partners and both Departments.

This innovative artist teacher programme supporting the implementation of the Arts in Education Charter was aimed at developing a model of arts in education CPD for teachers which could be used as a template for the future.

The presentation by the artists and teachers at the review day in Portlaoise and at Féilte illustrated the power of a collaborative model of teaching and learning which is foregrounded by, and through, arts in education practice. Therefore, in order to benefit from this, a careful consideration of the learning and experience gained by the teachers, the artists and the design team during the three phases of the initiative needs now to be conducted in order to inform any future developments.

Junior Cycle for Teachers – the support service providing professional development to teachers as part of the new junior cycle - plans to expand on the Arts in Junior Cycle CPD workshops, which were offered with the support of the Arts Council, in 2014. (See section on Junior Cycle below.)

Other partnership agencies, such as the Ark Cultural Centre for Children, have also been involved in innovative and well-focused CPD activity for teachers and artists. The Arts in Education Portal also has a significant potential for enhancing the work of artists and teachers in relation to best practice.

With regard to Initial Teacher Education, the Arts Council's artists' residencies in Colleges of Education are continuing. The anecdotal and research evidence to date indicate that these have been very well received in the Colleges, and have been having multi-faceted impact on the student teachers and on the cultural life of the college communities.

National Cultural Institutions (ECO)

In relation to the National Cultural Institutions, the group has sustained contact with their Education Community Outreach (ECO) sectors. Under the ambit of their 2014 “*A Fresh View Policy Framework*”, they have initiated the first phase in the development of a programme for action 2014-17. The Implementation Group has been very impressed by the quality, range and attractiveness of the programmes submitted to us by the sector. It may well be that their very valuable initiatives for arts-in-education and cultural heritage could benefit from a higher public profile. The Arts-In-Education Portal could be beneficially utilised as one element of this.

Mapping of Arts-in-Education Activities

Planning is afoot to incorporate a mapping of organisations, events, artists and locations at regional and local level throughout the country, which could be drawn upon for arts-in-education purposes. This will be incorporated in the Arts-In-Education Portal on an incremental basis. This could be a major resource for schools, and also help to highlight areas of spartan provision, with a view to its remediation. Recent discussions with the ESRI promise well for access to its data bank on arts provision from its longitudinal study *“Growing Up In Ireland”*

Local Arts Education Partnerships (LAEP)

While Cavan-Monaghan is still the only fully fledged, developed LAEP, the Group has links with agencies considering establishing such partnerships. Group members have been very active in establishing the values of such initiatives. The Group does not favour a prescribed model, as it is best if models evolve with local priorities and circumstances in mind. The Group is convinced that if, over a period of years, LAEPs became widespread throughout the country, it would have a seismic effect on the culture change for arts-in-education in Ireland.

Research

The research conducted on the Teacher-Artist Partnership CPD model, was very much in line with that envisaged in objective 4.9 of the Charter, As the Group’s report of April 2015 indicated, it is planned to establish a register of research in arts-in-education, and to this end a sequence of discussions have been held with relevant agencies. However, as the report also indicated, there is a need for some financial provision to allow the work to go ahead. To this end, Group members have held formal talks with the HEA. HEA staff expressed themselves in favour of the initiative and undertook to explore a budgetary process which could allow the project to proceed, but this has not been forthcoming

Junior Cycle

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) has been consulting widely with stakeholders across the fields of arts and education to support the design of the new Art, Craft, Design course in Junior Cycle. The Arts Council was among the agencies to actively engage in this process. Notably, the NCCA ran a consultation with students as part of this process, and the feedback from this group placed emphasis on the importance of real world experiences, such as visits to galleries and artists' studios, and visits by artists to their schools.

Junior Cycle for Teachers plans to expand on the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) pilot programme carried out with Arts Council support in 2014. JCT will continue to support teachers to engage their students with the arts in the new junior cycle by providing CPD workshops co-led by arts professionals and JCT subject advisors.

ARÍS – Arts Rich Schools

The Arts Council plans to oversee a programme of research and planning to support the delivery of ARÍS (Arts Rich Schools) beginning in the final quarter of 2015 and to be completed in 2016. The Charter group has determined that ARÍS requires further information (both quantitative and qualitative) about the context in which this initiative of the Charter will operate before an implementation phase can be undertaken.

Working together with both Departments and key stakeholders, the Arts Council will investigate the following:

- What information does the National Longitudinal Study (Growing up in Ireland) provide us about the arts experiences of young people in Irish schools currently and what does this information offer the development of ARÍS?
- What does an *arts rich school* look like in an Irish context and how can this be reflected in the development of ARÍS?
- What implementation plan can be agreed over an initial three year period (2017-2020)?

The implementation plan will require investment. While detailed costings will be developed in due course, it is anticipated that the annual investment required from the State will be in the region of €250,000.

The Implementation Group look forward to a meeting with Minister O Sullivan and Minister Humphries to discuss the Report and focus on the future work relating to the further implementation of the Charter's objectives

John Coolahan

Chairperson of the Implementation Group

28th October 2015